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For Release: September 11, 2008

Real Virginians, Not Models, Star in State's Tourism Advertising

-Print ads, Web videos and travel guide showcase Virginians whose passions for history, music, wine, outdoor adventure and life make travel to Virginia rewarding-

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(Roanoke, Va.) – The Virginia Tourism Corporation today unveiled print ads, Web videos and travel guide portraits starring passionate Virginians that will appear in magazines and Web sites across the country.

The new “Portraits of Passion” series is the heart of the **Virginia is for Lovers – Live Passionately** marketing campaign. The true stories of Virginians passionate about history, music, wine, outdoor adventure and life bring new excitement to the *Virginia is for Lovers* slogan and position the state as an enriching travel destination.

“These portraits capture the essence of the Virginia travel experience,” stated Alisa Bailey, president and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation. “These are real people who are so engaging that you want to know more about them instantly. Their personal stories connect with visitors on an emotional level and offer a glimpse into what makes Virginia such a rewarding destination.”

Seven Virginians posed for photographer Keith Lanpher to be transformed into “portraits” that will appear in print advertising in national and regional publications. BCF, VTC’s agency of record, designed the Portraits of Passion ads. Each features a member of the travel industry with whom travelers can connect on a visit to Virginia.

- **Eric Coulson** – surfing school sensation from [Surf & Adventure Co.](#) in **Sandbridge**, connects with travelers passionate about outdoor adventure.
- **Deborah Pratt** – oyster shucking champion from the **Urbanna Oyster Festival**, showcases Virginia’s culinary treasures.
- **Mary Watson-Delauder** – spunky sommelier from Lansdowne Resort in **Loudoun County**, entices wine lovers to more than 130 wineries across the state.
- **Gary Carroll** – artisan basket weaver from **Southwest Virginia**, exemplifies Virginia’s rich cultural traditions.
- **Mitch Bowman** – Civil War Trails executive director based in **Richmond**, symbolizes Virginia’s incomparable place in history.

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- **Kristina Robertson** – dog walking diva and owner of Barkley Square Gourmet Dog Bakery and Boutique in **Alexandria**, touts Virginia as a pet-friendly travel destination.
- **Mark Cline** – ghost tour extraordinaire from Professor Cline’s Haunted Monster Museum in **Rockbridge County**, plays up the spooky side of travel haunts in Virginia.

For the first time ever, online videos take center stage on Virginia.org, the commonwealth’s official travel Web site. The Virginians featured in the Portraits of Passion videos, 11 in total and each about two minutes long, tell their story in their own words, describing their personal passions in life and sharing their views on the best travel experiences in Virginia.

Eighteen Virginians, including Mark Woods from the historic **Roanoke Farmers Market**, were photographed by Cameron Davidson for the pages of the 2009 Virginia Travel Guide, debuting in December of this year. Davidson’s award-winning photography solidified the Virginia Travel Guide as the best in the nation for 2008.

Virginia is for Lovers is official tourism slogan of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Launched in 1969, Virginia is for Lovers is one of the most recognized and beloved tourism slogans in the world. At its core, Virginia is for Lovers represents a love of life and a passion for travel.

Visit Virginia.org to watch Virginians including Wayne Henderson, Luca Paschina, Joyce Blair and others in their Portraits of Passion videos. For more information about travel in Virginia call 1-800-VISITVA.

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Note to media: images of the Virginia is for Lovers print advertisements are available for download, with credit to Virginia Tourism Corporation (Virginia.org) at:

<http://www.vatc.org/pr/travelstories/PPads.asp>

Images of Mark Woods from the Roanoke Farmers Market by Cameron Davidson are available at:

<http://www.vatc.org/pr/travelstories/MarkWoods.asp>

Portraits of Passion online video clips are available by request for approved broadcast use. Contact VTC for more information.